

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS
HOUSTON DIVISION

RUSSELL, et al,	§	
Plaintiffs	§	
	§	No. 4:19-cv-00226
v.	§	Hon. Lee H. Rosenthal
	§	U.S. District Judge
HARRIS COUNTY, TEXAS, et al,	§	
Defendants	§	

REPORT OF SHERIFF ED GONZALEZ APRIL 28, 2020

Today's Houston Chronicle reported that the number of Harris County jail inmates with COVID-19 more than doubled in the past week. While technically true, context is required.

First, the numbers. We last reported (on April 24) 129 inmates testing positive. Today, the number is 308. This does not, however, represent a dramatic increase in the number of inmates who are sick. Instead, it demonstrates a dramatic increase in the number of tests and test results.

When the crisis began many weeks ago, the Sheriff's office had only 30 test kits. As a result of the efforts of the Sheriff and his staff, the HCSO is now able to test as many as 200 inmates per day. By and large, the test results merely confirm what the HCSO already knew, as they have been able to identify those with symptoms and those exposed to symptoms. In fact, because of the lag time between

the date of testing and the receipt of results, while shortened, inmates are often improving by the time positive test results come in.

The Sheriff has often remarked on the impossibility of social distancing in the jail. After all, the total jail population remains relatively steady; today, the total is 7515 (with 5844 felony pre-trial detainees). We are not seeing wholesale releases of non-violent offenders by the felony judges. Only an additional 10 inmates have been released since the last report (again, from the list of 426 potentially eligible).

Nevertheless, the Sheriff and the County Judge have supplemented the HCSO medical staff by gathering resources from other County departments to handle the health crisis in the jail. This was made necessary because the HCSO has itself suffered from the virus—the number of HCSO staff testing positive as of today is 207, with 387 in quarantine, and 47 having recovered and returned to work.

Today, 2720 inmates are in observational quarantine, 614 are in buffer quarantine, and 57 inmates who tested positive are in recovery. Only 4 inmates have required hospitalization, and three of those inmates have been returned to the jail to complete their recovery.

This is not to say that the crisis has reached its peak. It is too early to make that determination. We can perhaps say that the HCSO sees a slow flattening of the curve inside the jail.

Respectfully submitted.

/s/ Murray Fogler

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ATTORNEYS FOR SHERIFF ED GONZALEZ

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I certify that on April 28, 2020, a copy of this document was served on counsel of record via electronic filing in accordance with the USDC Southern District of Texas Procedures for Electronic Filing.

/s/ Murray Fogler

Murray Fogler